

Geishon Scholem's Influence

on Our Conception of Judaism:

- Zohar quote \rightarrow Idea [—] Until now the great luminary
has watched over us; now the time has come when we can only speak in his presence.

\rightarrow If you read obituaries of Scholem — "expert" in

J. myst. Like many media stories, this is true

as far as it goes — but still woefully inadequate

"Expert" means gen. small corner of discipline \Rightarrow

(Buber on Sch: "all have students; some have created schools;
but only 1 man has created entire academic disc.")

"Expert" more & more means ignorance of what is going on
outside of specialized field — not so Scholem —
maths, psych, rel, ultimately nothing escaped his
interest & all was utilized in his research.

"Expert" — in ivory tower away from world & its problems.

& At first glance it would seem that nothing
could be farther from world than J. myst —

This is also not so as I will attempt to
show you this evening.

Probably strangest part of Scholem's story is how he came to K: [From Berlin, p. ____]

- Background: assimilated Ger. family [Xmas celebrations]

- 4 brothers, 4 ways. Nationalist

~~Communist~~

Liberal

Zionist version

- What did Zionism mean in that context?

- not respectable option \Rightarrow rebellion

- break with assimilationist goal - "Germans of Jewish faith"

- Back to EI $\xrightarrow{\text{to Palestine 1923}}$ for Scholem back to

sources: Hebrew, Bible, Talmud \Rightarrow not return to Ortho. but way of being Jewish in modern times.

\Rightarrow Being a Zionist, a rebel within Ger J comm. meant taking a hard look at the old virtues of 19c J. historiography & especially at mysticism - arch example of bias in Was des Judentums.

J's in MA had little use for "history" — theo. explanation →
... 1916/67 used

In 19c, the theological unity of Jud. breaks up
; new ideology arises → assimilation in return for
equal rights [Emancipation]

In this atmosphere of struggle for emancipation
mod. J. scholarship was born w/ mission — to
prove J's worthy of = rights

How? a.) Judaism is rational rel → no superstition
→ worthy of entrance to Europe.

b.) Jud. as it was known in ghettos →
a thing of the past → "Give Jud. a decent
burial [Stenochius & Hebrew poet]"

— Greatest J. historian in 19c = Graetz. — Opposed
to ^{Ref / A assimilationist} Wd J as "nationalist" — but emphatically
part of it as far as att. toward J. myst.

It was — not "true" Judaism → outcome of
influence of "outside [Xian / Graetz] sources.

- Proving Zohar of 13c — consequences: forgery;
"mauthentic": Att. toward Hasidism → Yiddish
(refused to outsource ed. of his Geschichte in Yidd.)

when Scholem came back to ident. w/ Tnd. — this was
the sit. he found & when he wished to learn about K —
prompted, as he said ^{playfully} "by spark in my soul", — there
was no one to teach him [incident of Rabbi & K loss —
"Do I have to read them, too?"] → Antodeclat.

⇒ Of course, it is one thing to be attracted to
K and another thing entirely to make it your life's
work. What is it that he saw in K:

— not peripheral to rabbinic trad — but
central to it. (Really P was peripheral →)

— not forces from outside of J. — but
product of internal dynamic within.

— not antithetical to J. modernity but
progenitor of it: J. modernity not outside product of
~~ancestor~~

~~Let me explain these points further.~~
"Enlightenment" in Europe

For Scholem J. hist is pluralistic & dialectical struggle
conflict & competition within the trad. That is the
cause of its vitality. \Rightarrow Mysticism within Jud has
constructive role to play precisely because of its
irrationality — it is the "underground" force which
has ^{helped to} shaped J. thought & history so that ~~any~~ ^{any} ~~evaluation~~
evaluation of Jud. has to take it into
consideration.

— Because of this pluralism, there is nothing which
Scholem is prepared to read out of Judaism.

E.g. Sabbatian movement which was not
aberration but rather dialectical dev —
destroying med. Jud & preparing way for modernity
 \Rightarrow Haskalah / Reform; Zionism; Hasidism

— Messianism — apocalyptic (never left Jud)
— restorative

— both central to J. hist but ~~for~~
there is "price" to be paid for them:
retreat from history. Paradox of Zionism.

sees itself in trad. of mess. idea & also
advocates a return to plane of history

— What are the implications of Scholem's thought for
contemporary Jnd?

- Revision of J. historiography. — of our understanding of J. past
- he stood for return to Tradition — to the
sources, as the basis of Jnd. — w/o ret. to
Orthodoxy → Dialogue w/ the source. ~~not~~ rather than
rebellion against past in ignorance of it
- His Zionism (cultural of Ashd ha-Am) as personal
solution to problems of Jnd. in secular age. Zionism
is total rebellion against J. past & continuity
with it. It means ^{for him} ~~not~~ w/o ~~not~~ life and
all that The diaspora stands for.

Scholem the man is very much like the sources
he spent a lifetime researching. — open & esoteric
sides. There was a Scholem hidden from all — even
from 4 gens. of colleagues & students who were
present at his funeral in Jerusalem. → esp. personal
religious beliefs — in God, ~~Israel~~ "Is eclipse of
God true revelation." But one thing abundantly

clear. He was a man of truth - ~~not~~ to ~~311~~ - and spent
his years in the pursuit of truth. ~~In that~~, Such
men are rare and their presence among us must be
appreciated no less than their absence be wanted.
Happy the generation with such men in it.